

# **Judge Kidd to supervise Hinds County Drug Court**

January 26, 2011

Hinds County Circuit Judge Winston Kidd began supervision of the felony adult Hinds County Drug Court Probation Program Jan. 1.

Senior Circuit Judge Tomie Green appointed Judge Kidd to take over supervision of the felony adult Drug Court from Hinds County Court Judge William Skinner II.

Judge Green said, "Judge Kidd has expressed a desire for years to work with the program. He will do an excellent job."

Judge Kidd will maintain a civil and criminal docket, but will not hear criminal drug prosecutions other than those assigned to the Drug Court. The other three circuit judges will preside over the prosecutions of those felony drug charges which are not handled within the Drug Court. Judge Green said shifting the other drug cases to the other three judges will give Judge Kidd time to handle the Drug Court.

Judge Kidd said, "My goal will be to get individuals rehabilitated, get them off drugs and get them well and back home to their families. I recognize that in doing that, there is an advantage for society as a whole."

Former Senior Circuit Judge Swan Yerger assigned Judge Skinner to preside over all felony Drug Court cases in January 2007, in addition to his duties as County Court judge. Judge Skinner, who hears Youth Court cases, will continue to supervise the Hinds County Juvenile Drug Court which he started four years ago.

Judge Green said of Judge Skinner: "He's done a great job with what he has had available to him. We want to build on the program he has been instrumental in maintaining."

Judge Green said she hopes to increase the number of offenders referred to the Drug Court program. Forty-six people are currently enrolled in the felony adult Hinds County Drug Court program. Judge Green said that she would like to bring the Drug Court enrollment to somewhere between 200 and 250 within a year.

Judge Green said, "Certainly in Hinds County it (Drug Court) is needed probably more than any other place in the state. Other courts have pushed the program a lot better than we have. We want to become more active in getting help to the offenders who needed it."

Among the 16 other Circuit Court districts which have felony adult drug courts, five districts had more than 200 people enrolled in December 2010, according to statistics from the Administrative Office of Courts. The 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit of DeSoto, Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate and Yalobusha counties had 233 participants. The 12<sup>th</sup> Circuit of Forrest and Perry counties had 230. The 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit of Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties, and the 19<sup>th</sup> Circuit of George, Greene and Jackson counties, each had 210 participants. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit of Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Lafayette, Marshall, Tippah and Union counties had 207 participants.

Judge Green, who became senior circuit judge in January, said she has renewed commitments from the three other elected circuit judges to increase the utilization of the Drug Court program. She also wants to increase awareness among prosecutors, law enforcement, defense lawyers and the public of the benefits of the program.

Judge Green said that the drug treatment and intense supervision of Drug Court can benefit not only those charged with drug offenses, but non-violent property crime offenders such as those whose drug addiction prompts them to shoplift or steal to feed a drug habit.

Drug courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intense supervision with drug testing and frequent court appearances. Drug courts offer the incentive of a chance to remain out of jail and be employed, and the sanction of a jail sentence if participants fail to remain drug-free and in compliance with all program requirements.

Judge Green said she also hopes to pursue grant funding to expand the drug court concept to include persons who commit crimes due to mental illness. “We have a lot of people who should be on medication. We can expand the program to include those people as well. We are getting increasing numbers of people with mental disorders who, if they just took their medication, they would not be committing crimes.”

Judge Green noted that jailing people with mental health issues also increases medical costs of incarceration. “They don’t need to be in jail. Jail is not the place for these people,” she said.

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